

TITLE

An improved tuneable delay line.

TECHNICAL FIELD

5 The present invention relates to a tunable electromagnetic delay line, comprising a first conductor with a first main direction of extension, said first conductor being arranged on top of a non-conducting substrate.

BACKGROUND ART

10 Delay lines are a common component in many contemporary electrical systems, usually microwave systems. Examples that could be mentioned of fields of technology where delay lines are used are radar systems, amplifiers and oscillators.

15 Most technologies used in delay lines result in bulky components, which are usually not cost-effective and are difficult to integrate with standard semiconductor technologies. Moreover, it is quite desirable for a delay line to be tuneable, i.e. to have a delay time which can be altered. In addition, most contemporary tuneable delay lines are quite power consuming, which is

20 usually a drawback.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

Hence, as described above, there is a need for a tuneable delay line which is of a small size, has low power consumption, and capable of having long

25 delay times.

This need is met by the present invention in that it discloses a tunable electromagnetic delay line which comprises a first conductor with a first main direction of extension, where the first conductor is arranged on top of a non-conducting substrate.

The delay line of the invention additionally comprises a layer of a ferroelectric material with first and second main surfaces, which layer separates the first conductor and the substrate. The delay line also comprises a second conductor with a second main direction of extension.

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The first and second main directions of extensions essentially coincide with each other, and the first and second conductors are each other's mirror image with respect to an imagined line in the center of the delay line along said first and second main directions of extension. The tuning of the delay line of the invention is accomplished by applying a voltage between said first and second conductors.

The advantages afforded by this design will become evident in the detailed description given below.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention will be described in more detail in the following, with reference being made to the drawings, in which

Fig 1 shows a top view of a first embodiment of the invention, and

20 Fig 2 shows a cross section of the device of fig 1, along the line II-II, and

Fig 3 shows a top view of a second embodiment of the invention, and

Fig 4 shows a cross section of the device of fig 3, along the line III-III, and

Fig 5 shows a top view of another embodiment of the invention, and

Fig 6 shows a cross section of the device of fig 5, along the line VI- VI, and

25 Figs 7-12 show top views of various other embodiments of the invention.

EMBODIMENTS

In fig 1, a first embodiment 100 of a tuneable delay line according to the

invention is shown in top view. The delay line 100 comprises a first conductor

30 110, which has a first main direction of extension, indicated by the arrow A in fig 1. In addition to the first conductor 110, the delay line 100 also comprises

a second conductor 120, which has a second main direction of extension, indicated by the arrow B in fig 1.

Shifting now to fig 2, a cross section of the arrangement 100 from fig 1 is 5 shown, along the line II – II in fig 1. As can be seen in fig 2, the first and the second conductors 110, 120 are arranged on top of a layer 130 of a ferroelectric material which has a high permittivity. Some examples of such materials are BaTiO₃, SrTiO₃ and various combinations of Ba, Sr and TiO₃, usually expressed as Ba_xSr_(1-x)TiO₃ or combinations of Na, K and NO₃, 10 usually expressed as Na_xK_(1-x)NO₃.

Below the layer 130 of the ferroelectric material, there is arranged a supporting layer or substrate 240 of a non-conducting material. In fig 2, there is also schematically shown how the delay τ of the device 100 is altered: an 15 AC control voltage, V_{TUNE} , is applied between the first and second conductors 110, 120, and the voltage is altered to achieve the desired delay τ . Also indicated in fig 2 with broken lines, is the fact that there is a capacitive coupling between the two conductors 110, 120.

20 Reverting now to fig 1, it can be seen that in the delay line 100 of the invention, the first main direction of extension, A, of the first conductor 110 essentially coincides with the second main direction of extension, B, of the second conductor 120, and also that the first 110 and second 120 conductors are each other's mirror image with respect to an imagined line C in the center 25 of the delay line, along said first and second main directions of extension.

30 Preferably, as can also be seen in fig 1, the first conductor 110 is meander shaped, and is comprised alternately of sections 111 with a second direction of extension, and sections 113 with a third direction of extension. The second conductor 120 is comprised alternately of sections 112 with a fourth direction of extension and sections 115 with a fifth direction of extension.

According to the invention, the second and fourth directions of extension essentially coincide with each other, and the third and fifth directions of extension also essentially coincide with each other.

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In the embodiment shown in fig 1, the second and third directions of extension of the first conductor are essentially perpendicular to each other, with the second direction of extension essentially coinciding with the first conductor's first main direction of extension. Due to the meander shape of the embodiment shown in fig 1, what this means is that both the first and the second conductor have one section that points "straight ahead", i.e. in a general direction of the device, and then one section that is perpendicular to the general direction of the device. Both conductors have alternating such sections, which is what causes the meander shape of the conductors in this 10 embodiment.

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As mentioned previously, and as also shown in fig 2, there is a capacitive coupling between the two conductors of the device.

20 Another embodiment 300 of the invention is shown in fig 3. This embodiment enables more flexibility in terms of tailoring the impedance of the device. The device 100 of figs 1 and 2 comprises inductors in the form of the meander lines, but only has an implicit (?) capacitive coupling between the meander lines. The embodiment 300, as opposed to this, is equipped with capacitors, 25 shown with dashed lines in fig 3, and in a cross section in fig 4, the cross section being along the line IV - IV in fig 3.

As shown in fig 3 and 4, the embodiment 300 comprises the same meander shaped first 310 and second 320 conductors as the embodiment 100 in figs 1 30 and 2. However, the embodiment 300 additionally comprises a third conductor 350 arranged between the non-conducting substrate and the layer of ferroelectric material, with the third conductor being arranged so that it

extends from a point below the first conductor to a point below the second conductor, in a direction of extension which is essentially perpendicular to said first and second directions of extension.

5 Preferably, the third conductor 350 is arranged below the first 310 and second 320 conductors at a point below sections of the first and second conductors that point in the general direction A/B of the device 300, the third conductor then being arranged so that it "connects" the first and second conductors, the word "connect" here being used in the sense that at least a
10 first part of the third conductor is located below the first conductor, and at least a second part of the third conductor is located below the second conductor. Thus, capacitors are formed between the first and second conductor respectively, and the third conductor.

15 Suitably, such third conductors are arranged at all or most of those locations on the device 300 which fulfill the conditions stated above for the location of the third conductor 350. Thus, the device 300 of the invention will exhibit a plurality of such conductors, all located at corresponding places in the device 300.

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Tuning of the delay of the delay line 300 is accomplished by applying a DC-voltage between the first 310 and the second 320 conductors, as shown in fig 4.

25 Yet a further embodiment 500 of a device according to the invention is shown in figs 5a – 5c. This embodiment shows a way of decreasing the ohmic losses: a first conducting pattern, a delay line 505, shown in fig 5c, is formed in the bottom layer of the device, i.e. between a substrate and a ferroelectric material, the first delay line 505 being essentially similar to those shown in
30 figs 1 and 3, i.e. it has two meander shaped conductors 510, 520, essentially parallel to each other, extending in a common general direction, which conductors are essentially each other's mirror image with respect to an

imagined line C between them, said imagined line extending in the general direction of the device.

Thus, the two conductors of the delay line 505 have one section 532 that 5 points "straight ahead", i.e. in the general direction of the device, and then one section 531 that is perpendicular to the general direction C of the device 500. Both conductors 510, 520, have alternating such sections, each section being joined to the next one. Thus, each conductor has a recurring pattern of 10 two parallel sections 531, 534, that point "outwards" with respect to the general direction of the device, with said two parallel sections being joined at the "outer" edge of the device by a conductor 532 which is perpendicular to said two parallel sections. Each of said two parallel sections 531, 534, is then joined at its other end, the "inner end" of the meander pattern, to an adjoining 15 such section by a conductor 533 which is again perpendicular to the direction of the parallel sections.

As shown in fig 6, which is a cross section of the device of fig 5 a along the line IV – IV, the device also comprises a second conducting pattern, 510 arranged on top of the ferroelectric layer. The second conducting pattern is 20 shown in top view in fig 5b: the second conducting pattern is similar to the first conducting pattern, with the exception that it does not exhibit the joining conductors 533 at the "inner end".

In the device 500, the first and second conducting patterns are arranged so 25 that corresponding sections "cover" each other, resulting in the device shown in fig 5a. As can be seen in fig 5b, the second conducting pattern 510 also exhibits conducting strips 512 which "connect" the joining strips of at the "inner edge" of the first conducting pattern, i.e. the connecting strips 512 in the second conducting pattern extend in a direction perpendicular to the 30 general direction of the device, so as to cover or connect one connecting strip in each meander line of the first conducting pattern.

The delay lines shown in figs 1-5 and described above have many positive qualities, but there is a certain amount of mutual negative coupling between the inductor strips, i.e. the meander lines, which will reduce the total inductance of the device, and thus negatively influence the delay time of the 5 devices.

Fig 7 shows an embodiment 700 of the invention which will alleviate the problem of mutual negative coupling between the strips: the device comprises a first 710 and a second 720 conducting pattern, arranged on 10 different sides of the ferroelectric layer. Each of the conducting patterns alternately comprises sections arranged at 45 degrees or negative 45 degrees, with respect to the general direction C of the device. However, if the first section 721 of the first conductor is arranged at 45 degrees, the first section 713 of the second conductor will be arranged at negative 45 degrees, 15 the two conductors being arranged so that sections which point in different directions intersect each other. Due to the geometry of this, the sections will intersect each other at an angle of 90 degrees, which will essentially eliminate the negative magnetic coupling between the strips.

20 In a more generalized sense, the embodiment shown in fig 7 could be described in the following way: The first conductor 710 alternately comprises sections of a second 712 and a third 711 direction of extension, with the second direction 712 of extension being at an angle α with respect to the device's main direction C of extension and the third direction 713 of 25 extension being at an angle β with respect to the device's main direction C of extension, α being in the interval between zero and ninety degrees, and β being in the interval between ninety and one hundred eighty degrees.

30 The second conductor 720 also comprises sections of a fourth 713 and a fifth 714 direction of extension, with the fourth direction of extension being at an angle α' with respect to the device's main direction C of extension and the fifth direction of extension being at an angle β' with respect to the device's

main direction C of extension, α' being in the interval between zero and minus ninety degrees, and β' being in the interval between minus ninety and minus one hundred eighty degrees.

5 The first 710 and second 720 conductors are arranged in the delay line 700 so that the first conductor's sections 712 in the second direction of extension cross the second conductor's sections 713 in the fourth direction of extension, and so that the first conductor's sections 711 in the third direction of extension cross the second conductor's sections in the fifth 714 direction 10 of extension.

Fig 8 shows a version 800 of the device of fig 7: in this embodiment, the sections of the two strips 810, 820, do not intersect each other, rather, they will only coincide or "cover each other" in their respective layers at those 15 points where two adjacent sections in each conductor are joined to each other. One such point 815 has been encircled in fig 8 for the sake of clarity.

The versions of the invention which have been shown in figs 1-8 and described above exhibit excellent properties with respect to wide band 20 applications, but fig 9 shows a way of achieving even better wide band properties: the basic design of fig 7 is adhered to, but the width of the device is tapered.

As an alternative to tapering the device as shown in fig 9, as shown in fig 10, 25 the device can periodically taper and then widen again, in the same dimension that it tapered.

In figs 11a and 11b, variants of the invention are shown which allow better 30 possibilities of tailoring the capacitance of the device: in these versions of the invention, there are still two conducting lines 1110, 1120, which are located on either side of a ferroelectric layer supported by a non-conducting substrate, and the lines 1110, 1120, have sections which cross each other,

preferably at an angle of 90 degrees, as was also the case in fig 7. However, in these variants, where the sections cross each other, one of the sections is altered, to either have an aperture, preferably shaped as a square, or exhibits a significantly much narrower width during all or most of the crossing.

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Figs 12a and 12b show top views of components in another embodiment 1200 of the invention, and fig 12c shows the embodiment 1200 as a whole in a top view. This embodiment may give even further reduced losses and increased process tolerances, and uses a capacitance which reduces the 10 required bias voltage, at the same time as it eliminates the floating ground in the middle.

Fig.12a shows the bottom layer, and fig 12b shows the top layer, both layers being conducting, and separated in the same manner as the conductors in 15 the embodiments shown in figs 7-11.

The bottom conductor 12a and the top conductor 12b are of essentially the same design, and intended to be arranged “on top of each other”, with the mentioned separating layers between them, in such a manner that 20 corresponding parts in each conductor “cover” each other. Each conductor comprises two meander shaped conducting patterns, being arranged to be each other’s mirror image with respect to an imaginary line extending in the direction of the conductors, between said conductors. Thus, each of the meander patterns will have sections parallel to each other which extend 25 perpendicularly to the general direction of extension of the conductor, and sections parallel to each other which have a direction of extension that coincides with the general direction of extension of the conductor, said two kinds of sections alternating in the meander pattern. Thus, in each meander line, of those sections which have a direction of extension that coincides with 30 the general direction of extension of the conductor, there will be sections that are closest to the other meander line, and such sections which are the most distant from the other meander line.

In order to achieve the desired capacitive coupling, in the bottom conductor every other such "closest" section comprises a protrusion towards the other meander line, the protrusion ending in a thin line, and every other closest 5 section comprises a recess allowing for a slight "intrusion" of said thin line.

In the top conductor, the "closest" sections corresponding to those closest sections in the bottom conductor which have said recess comprise a square or rectangular aperture which will "enclose" said intruding part of the thin line, 10 although in an other plane of the device, which will enhance the production tolerance of the device.